Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act

On May 20, 2009, President Obama signed the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009. The HEARTH Act amends and reauthorizes the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act with substantial changes, including:

- A consolidation of HUD's competitive grant programs;
- The creation of a Rural Housing Stability Program;
- A change in HUD's definition of homelessness and chronic homelessness;
- A simplified match requirement;
- An increase in prevention resources; and,
- An increase in the emphasis on performance.

The HEARTH Act requires communities to implement strategies to prevent the loss of housing, help people quickly move out of homelessness and into housing, and ensure housing stability. At the same time, communities must track and report their homeless assistance system's progress toward these outcomes.

HEARTH Act: Continuum of Care Performance *Indicators*

- Length of time homeless
- Subsequent return to homelessness
- Overall reduction in number of persons who experience homelessness
- Job and income growth for persons who are homeless
- Reduction in first time homeless
- Access/coverage (thoroughness in reaching persons who are homeless)
- Other accomplishments related to reducing homelessness

HEARTH Measures

Measure 1: Length of time individuals and families remain homeless

Purpose: A reasonably short length of time homeless indicates system and program success in rapidly re-housing persons who are homeless. It can also indicate efficiency related to turnover of beds which is essential to meet system demand for emergency shelter.

Programs: Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing

Definition: The average cumulative number of days households receive emergency shelter and transitional housing as measured by their sum total days of program participation (or housing services for emergency shelter). For transitional housing, this is measured from their first program entry to exit or last day of report period (comparison model). For emergency shelter, this is measured by adding all of their housing services during the report period (service model).

Measure 2: The extent to which individuals and families who leave homelessness experience additional spells of homelessness

Purpose: A low percentage of individuals and families experiencing additional spells of homelessness indicates system and program success in preparing individuals and families for permanent housing and providing follow-up and prevention services to divert people from re-entering the system.

Programs: All programs

Definition: The percentage of distinct households that leave any program type to a permanent housing situation and return to emergency shelter or transitional housing within one to two years following exit.

Measure 3: Overall reduction in the number of homeless individuals and families

Purpose: A reduction in the number of homeless individuals and families indicates programs' ability to move people into permanent housing. It also shows system success in diverting people from becoming homeless.

Programs: Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, Permanent Supportive Housing

Definition: The number of distinct households that exit to successful housing as defined by their program type. For emergency shelter programs, this would be transitional housing or permanent housing. For transitional housing or permanent supportive housing, this would be permanent housing.

Measure 4: Jobs and income growth for homeless individuals and families

Purpose: An increase in income and job attainment while in programs indicates program and system success in connecting clients with jobs and increasing families' ability to become self-sufficient. A positive average increase and a higher rate of earned income are considered positive.

Programs: Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, Permanent Supportive Housing, HPRP

Definition: The average increase in income by program type. This would be calculated by subtracting each client's entry income from the exit income and averaging it across clients. The percentage of clients who have "Earned Income" as a source of income at program exit.

Measure 5: Success at reducing the number of individuals and families who become homeless

Purpose: A reduction in the number of individuals and families who become homeless indicates that the system is effective in diverting people from homelessness by providing supportive services to help stabilize those at risk of becoming homeless.

Programs: Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing (HPRP) programs, Prevention programs

Definition: Decrease in the number (or percentage) of "new" clients in the system. New clients are defined as people who: (a) entered an emergency shelter or transitional housing program during the quarter and (b) have not received any homeless residential services in the 15 months prior to the client's first program entry date during the quarter.